

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Gen44 Summit September 30, 2010

The President. Hello, DC! Thank you, DC. Thank you so much. I'm fired up! Thank you.

Let me, first of all, thank one of the finest DNC chairmen we've ever had, Tim Kaine. Please give it up for him. Tim Kaine—I want to just point this out, Tim Kaine supported me. He was the first statewide elected official outside of Illinois to endorse my candidacy for President. That's the kind of person—he supported me when nobody could pronounce my name. [Laughter] There was nothing in it for him, except he thought it was the right thing to do. And that's the kind of leader that you remember.

I know you heard from David Plouffe, my former campaign manager and great friend of mine. And I understand B.o.B was in the house. I will not do my version of "Airplane." [Laughter]

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back.

It is good to see this crowd so fired up. I need you to be fired up. I need you to stay fired up, all the way to November 2. All the way to November 2. Because November 2 is going to say a lot about your future: a lot about your individual futures, but also about the future of our country.

Two years ago, with the help of a lot of you, some of you getting involved in politics for the first time, you defied the Washington conventional wisdom. I mean, you remember. Folks did not think we were going to win; let's face it. Because they didn't know about you. They said, no, you can't overcome the cynicism of our politics. No, you can't overcome the special interests. No, you can't make real progress on the big challenges of our time. They said, no, you can't. What did you say?

Audience members. Yes, we can!

The President. You said, yes, we can.

You proved that the power of everyday people going door to door, neighbor to neighbor, friend to friend, using networks, using the Internet, that that was stronger than the forces of the status quo. And every single one of you is a

shareholder in that mission to rebuild our country and reclaim our future.

So I'm back here today just in case you've forgotten what that feels like, to change the country. Because on November 2, we face another test, and the stakes could not be higher.

When I arrived in Washington about 20 months ago, some of you were there. It was really cold. It was a cold day. It was a cold day, but the spirit was warm. And our hope was that we could pull together, Democrats and Republicans and Independents, to confront the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. What we hoped was that we could get beyond some of the old political divides—red States, blue States—that had prevented us from making progress for so long. And we came into this with that spirit because we understood that we're proud to be Democrats, but we're prouder to be Americans.

And instead, what we confronted when we arrived was just politics, pure and simple, an opposition party that was still stuck in the same failed policies of the past, whose leaders in Congress were determined from the start to just let us deal with the mess that they had done so much to create.

Their calculation was simple and cynical. They knew that it was going to take a long time to solve the economic challenges we were facing. It was the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. They understood that because it was going to take a long time, people would be frustrated. They'd feel anxious. They'd be fearful. And so what the other side calculated was, you know, if we just sit on the sidelines, we let Obama and the Democrats in Congress deal with everything, then we can do well in the polls. That was their theory.

And that's what they did for the last 20 months. They've said no to just about every idea I've proposed, every policy I've proposed, even ideas they've traditionally agreed with. [Laughter] I'm not exaggerating. I mean, we had situations where they would sponsor bills, I'd say okay, and then they'd say, oh, well, if you're

okay with it, we must be against it. [Laughter] Happened a bunch of times. That's true.

And because they understood that folks were going to be anxious and fearful, they've been tapping into that fear. And now the pundits are saying that the base of the Republican Party is mobilized and energized and excited, and that all of us who worked so hard in 2008, well, maybe we're not as energized, maybe we're not as engaged.

Audience members. No!

The President. That's what they're saying. I'm just the messenger here. [Laughter] They say that there is an enthusiasm gap, and that the same Republicans and the same policies that left our economy in a shambles and the middle class struggling year after year, that those folks might all ride back into power. That's the conventional wisdom in Washington.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. We cannot let that happen. We cannot sit this out. We can't let this country fall backwards. The stakes are too high. We have to move this country forward for you and your future. So there better not be an enthusiasm gap, people. Not now. Not this time.

The other side would like you to believe that this election is a referendum on me or on the economy, on anything but them. They are counting on amnesia. [Laughter] They're counting that folks don't remember them. But make no mistake: This election is a choice. And the choice could not be clearer.

For the last decade, the Republicans in Washington subscribed to a very simple philosophy: You cut taxes, mostly for millionaires and billionaires. You cut regulations for special interests, whether it's oil companies or banks or insurance companies. You cut back on investments in education and clean energy and research and technology. And basically, the idea was that if you had blind faith in the market, if you let corporations play by their own rules, if you let everybody else fend for themselves, including young people, including the next generation, then somehow America would grow and prosper. That was the theory.

Now, look, here's what we know. The philosophy failed. We tested it. We tried it. We tried

it for 8 years; it didn't work. When they were in charge, job growth was slower than it's been in any decade since World War II. Between 2001 and 2009, middle class incomes fell by 5 percent. This is when they were in charge. The cost of everything from health care to college tuition just kept on going up. A free-for-all on Wall Street led to the very crisis we're still digging out of today. And by the way, we went from record surpluses to record deficits.

These are the folks who say that they care about wasteful spending. They took us from a surplus when a Democrat was in charge to big deficits when they were in charge. That's the truth. Those are the facts.

They're counting on amnesia. They think you all forgot. So I've had two main jobs since I was President: to rescue this economy from crisis, and then to rebuild it stronger than it was before, so that you look forward to the 21st century as being the American century, just like the 20th century was the American century.

And over the last 20 months, we've made progress on both these fronts. There's no longer a possibility of a second depression. The economy is growing again. Private sector jobs we've created for 8 consecutive months. There are about 3 million Americans who would not be working today if it weren't for the economic plan we put in place.

We passed Wall Street reform to make sure a crisis like this never happens again. No more taxpayer-funded bailouts. We set up reforms that will stop mortgage lenders from taking advantage of homeowners. We reformed credit card practices so they won't hit you up with hidden fees or jack up your rates without reason.

We've started investing again in American research, American technology, homegrown American clean energy, because I don't want solar panels or wind turbines or electric cars built in Europe or built in Asia. I want them built right here in the United States of America, because we're all about making it in America.

To help middle class families get ahead, we passed a tax cut for 95 percent of working families in this country. We passed 16 different tax cuts for America's small-business owners. We passed health care reform to make sure insur-

ance companies won't deny you coverage and you can stay on your parents' coverage until you're 26 years old.

We finally fixed up the student loan system so that tens of billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies that were going to banks now go where it should to help you get an education. That's what we're about.

And along the way, we kept a promise that I made on the day I announced my candidacy. We have removed all combat troops from Iraq, and we are ending that war.

So that's the progress that we've made. That's a testimony to you. That's the progress that we worked so hard for in 2008. But we're not done. We're not close to being finished. The hole we're climbing out of is a deep one—deeper than the last three recessions combined. We lost 8 million jobs. Almost all of them—all those jobs—were lost before my economic policies had any chance to take effect. We lost 4 million jobs before I was sworn in, in this recession; 750,000 the month I was being sworn in.

And on top of that, the middle class has been struggling for more than a decade. So there are millions of families out there who are still treading water, millions still barely able to make their mortgage payments or pay the bills. I hear about these folks every day because they write me letters or they tell me when I'm on the road. And people are frustrated, they're anxious, they're scared about the future.

And they have a right to be impatient about the pace of change. I'm impatient. But I also know this: Now is not the time to quit. Now is not the time to give up. We've been through worse as a nation. We've come out stronger, from war to depression to the great struggles for equal rights and civil rights. It took time to free the slaves. It took time for women to get the vote. It took time for workers to get the right to organize.

But if we stay on focus, if we stay on course, then ultimately, we will make progress. It takes time. Progress takes sacrifice. Progress takes faith. But progress comes. And it will come for your generation, for this generation, if we work for it and fight for it and if we believe in it. That's something I believe.

The biggest mistake we could make is to let impatience or frustration lead to apathy and indifference, because that guarantees the other side wins. And if they do win, they will spend the next 2 years fighting for the very same policies that led us into this recession in the first place, the same policies that left middle class families behind for more than a decade, the same policies you fought hard to change in 2008.

Just look at the agenda of the leaders of the other party. They unveiled it last week, called it their "Pledge to America."

Audience members. Boo!

The President. That's what they called it. Now, their pledge was actually written with the help of a former lobbyist for AIG and Exxon-Mobil. So that gives you how much——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. ——a sense of how much change they intend.

The centerpiece of their pledge is a \$700 billion tax cut. This is their main economic policy, their main jobs program, their main focus, a \$700 billion tax cut for the wealthy that 98 percent of Americans will never see a dime of. I'd get a tax break under their plan. [*Laughter*] That would be good for me, but not for most of you all.

Now, keep in mind, we don't have \$700 billion, so we'd have to borrow this from China or from some other country. And then we would be giving a tax cut worth an average of \$100,000 to every millionaire and billionaire in America.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Wait, wait, no, hold on, it gets worse. [*Laughter*]

When you ask them, well, where are you going to get this \$700 billion? Do you have some magic beans somewhere? Are you going to—[*laughter*]—I mean, what's—how is this going to come about? They don't have an answer. Now, they will say, well, we're going to cut spending. So you say, okay, what are you going to cut? And then what they say is, well, we'll cut education by 20 percent. We'll eliminate 200,000 children from early childhood education programs like Head Start.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. We'll cut financial aid for 8 million college students.

Audience members. No!

The President. At a time when the education of our country's citizens is probably the best predictor of that country's economic success, they think it's more important to give another tax break to folks who are on the Forbes 400 list.

Now, I want to ask my Republican friends: Do you think China is cutting back on education?

Audience members. No!

The President. Do you think South Korea is making it harder for its citizens to get a college education?

Audience members. No!

The President. These countries aren't playing for second place. And guess what, the United States doesn't play for second place. We play for first place.

And I will not allow politicians in Washington to put your future at risk for another tax cut we can't afford and don't need. That's the choice in this election. That's why you need to be involved. Your future is at stake.

In fact, here's another thing they want to do to pay for this tax cut for the wealthy. They want to roll back what's remaining of our Recovery Act that gave a tax break to working and middle class families, 110 million people out there. So they want to roll back your tax cut to give their buddies a tax cut.

Look, we have a different idea than they do about what the next 2 years should look like. And it's an idea rooted in our belief about how this country was built. Government doesn't have all the answers to our problems. Government doesn't have the main role in creating jobs or prosperity. Government should be lean and efficient. Look, we're—we've proposed a 3-year spending freeze. We've set up a bipartisan fiscal commission to deal with our deficit.

But the first Republican President, my favorite Republican, Abraham Lincoln, here's what he said about government. Here's what he said about government. He said, "I believe that government should do for the people what they cannot do better for themselves." I believe in a

country that rewards hard work and responsibility, a country where we look after one another, a country that says, I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper. I'm going to give a hand up. I'm going to join hands with folks and try to lift all of us up so we all have a better future, not just some, but all of us, every child in America. That's what I believe.

I believe in an America that gave my grandfather the chance to go to college because of the GI bill, and that gave my grandparents a chance to buy a house because of the Federal Housing Authority, an America that gave their children and grandchildren the chance to get the best education in the world through scholarships and student loans. That's the America I know. And that's the choice in this election.

Instead of giving tax breaks to millionaires and billionaires, we want to make permanent tax cuts for middle class Americans, because you deserve a break. Instead of cutting education and student aid, we want to make permanent our new college tax credit, so that you can get \$10,000 worth of tuition relief—everybody who's going to 4 years of college. We want to make clear that in good times or in bad, no young American should have to sacrifice the dream of a college education just because they can't afford it. That's what we believe. That's the choice in this election.

If the other side takes control of Congress, they'll spend the next 2 years to preserve tax breaks for companies that create jobs and profits overseas. We want to shut down those subsidies. We want to give those tax breaks to companies that are creating jobs right here in the United States of America—that's what we believe in—to American manufacturers, to clean energy companies, to entrepreneurs who are researching and investing and making it here in the United States of America. That's what we believe. That's who we want to help.

If the other side takes back Congress, they've promised to give back power to the same special interests we've been fighting for the last 20 months. We can't let them do that. We can't go back to the days when insurance companies can drop your coverage just when you get sick, or credit card companies can jack up your rates

whenever they feel like it. We can't go back to a system that results in taxpayer-funded bailouts. We can't allow special interests to take the reins again. We have to keep fighting. There is too much at stake right now.

So listen, Generation 44. It comes down to this: Many of the folks in the other party, they're running to go back to the exact same things they were doing before.

I've used this analogy before; some of you may have heard it. Imagine they were driving a car—[laughter]—and they drove it into the ditch. And I put on my boots, and the Democrats put on their boots, Tim Kaine put on his boots. We all went down into the ditch. We were expecting the Republicans to come help. It's muddy down there and dusty. And they drove down there. In fact, we pulled some of them out of the car. [Laughter] Now they're standing up on the road, sipping a Slurpee, watching us. [Laughter]

And we're pushing and we're shoving and we're sweating, and there are bugs flying around. [Laughter] And we look up and say, "How about coming down and helping us out?" They say: "No, that's all right. But you all should push harder. You're not pushing the right way." [Laughter]

So we just keep pushing. Finally, we get the car up on level ground. It's a little dented. It needs a tuneup, needs a wash. [Laughter] Fender's all bent up. But it's pointing in the right direction. We're ready to move forward. Suddenly, we get a tap on the shoulder, and you look back, and it's the Republicans. [Laughter] And we say, "Well, what do you want now?" "We want the keys back," they say.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. But guess what, you can't have the keys back. You don't know how to drive. We don't want to end up back in the ditch. We can't afford to go back in the ditch. I don't want to have to push again. [Laughter] I want us to move forward.

I hope all of you notice that when you want to go forward in your car, what do you do?

Audience members. "D"!

The President. You put it in "D." When you want to go backwards, what do you do?

Audience members. "R"!

The President. You put it in "R." There's no coincidence there. We got to put it in "D." We got to go forward. We got to go forward, not backwards. We've got to go backwards—we got to go forwards. We can't go backwards.

At the end of the day, whether they get the keys back or not will depend on you. Because, look, look, the other side is excited. And thanks to a recent Supreme Court decision called *Citizens United*—

Audience members. Boo!

The President. —they're being helped along this year by special interest groups. They are allowed to spend unlimited amounts of money on attack ads. And they don't have to disclose who's behind these ads. They have these innocuous names like Americans for Prosperity or Americans for Apple Pie—[laughter]—Moms for Motherhood. And you look back, and it's like "The Wizard of Oz." You look behind the curtain and there's some Republican operative, and it's insurance companies or the banks or all the folks that were fighting change.

I mean, why do you think they're giving up all this money? I mean, it's possible that maybe they're doing it because they want good government.

Audience members. No!

The President. But I got to admit, I'm kind of skeptical. [Laughter]

So that's why we've got to work even harder in this election. That's why we've got to fight their millions of dollars with millions of voices who are ready to finish what we started in 2008. Because if everybody who showed up in 2008 shows up in 2010, then we will win.

All of you are being tested. All of you are being tested. I know times are tough. I know that we're a long way from that cold day when we had a couple million people out on the Mall, and everybody felt excitement. But you know what? That was the easy part. You know, you had the "Hope" poster. [Laughter] You had Bono and Beyonce singing at the concert. You know, that was the celebration. But I told you guys when we were campaigning that change was going to take time, that power concedes

nothing without a fight, that it was always going to be hard.

And by the way, you did not elect me to do what was easy. You did not elect me to go out there and put my finger out to the wind and figure out how to keep myself in office. You elected me to do what is right. You elected me to do what is true. And you got involved because you believe that this was the moment to do what is right and take on the challenges that had been ignored for too long.

So now is not the time to quit. Now is not the time to lose heart. That involvement can't end in 2008. That election was not just about putting me in the White House. It was about building a movement for change that went beyond one campaign or any one candidate. It was about remembering that here in the United States, our destiny is not written for us, it is written by us. We have the power

to shape our future. Our future is in our hands.

And that's what's being tested right now: whether we've got the courage to keep going forward in the face of difficulty, in the face of uncertainty. And if you are willing to work hard and knock on doors and make phone calls and call up your friends and neighbors and coworkers and family, I promise you, we will not stop until we have finally made the American Dream true for every American out here.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:12 p.m. at DAR Constitution Hall. In his remarks, he referred to musicians Bobby Ray "B.o.B" Simmons, Beyonce G. Knowles, and Paul D. "Bono" Hewson; and former lobbyist Brian Wild. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 1.

Remarks on the Resignation of White House Chief of Staff Rahm I. Emanuel and the Appointment of Peter M. Rouse as Interim White House Chief of Staff

October 1, 2010

Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the least suspenseful announcement of all time. [Laughter] As almost all of you have reported—[laughter]—my Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel, has informed me that he will be leaving his post today to explore other opportunities. [Laughter]

This is a bittersweet day here at the White House. On the one hand, we are all very excited for Rahm as he takes on a new challenge for which he is extraordinarily well qualified. But we're also losing an incomparable leader of our staff and one who we are going to miss very much.

When I first started assembling this administration, I knew we were about to face some of the most difficult years this country has seen in generations. The challenges were big and the margin for error was small: two wars, an economy on the brinks of collapse, and a set of tough choices about issues that we had put off for decades, choices about health care and energy and

education, how to rebuild a middle class that had been struggling for far too long.

And I knew that I needed somebody at my side who I could count on, day and night, to help get the job done. In my mind, there was no candidate for the job of Chief of Staff who would meet the bill as well as Rahm Emanuel. And that's why I told him that he had no choice in the matter. He was not allowed to say no. It wasn't just Rahm's broad array of experiences in Congress and in the White House, in politics and in business. It was also the fact that he just brings an unmatched level of energy and enthusiasm and commitment to every single thing that he does.

This was a great sacrifice for Rahm, Amy, and the family to move out here. Rahm gave up one of the most powerful positions on Capitol Hill to do this. And in the last 20 months, Rahm has exceeded all of my expectations. It's fair to say that we could not have accomplished what